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ABSTRACT

This paper presents two examples of the case study method applied to enhance preservice teachers' decision-making abilities and multicultural perspectives. In the first example, preservice teachers (N=17) enrolled in a sophomore educational psychology course chose a case from a preselected list to diagnose and present to the class for analysis and discussion. An ERIC search was conducted to support case solutions; the cases were presented orally to peers; a class discussion was led incorporating alternative viewpoints; and the final exam was a written clinical case study on one child from an urban field placement. In the second example, 39 preservice teachers were organized into groups of 3 to foster principles of cooperative learning. Requirements were the same as in the first example with the additional inclusion of three related articles. Results suggest that the case study format not only increased understanding and comprehension of issues in the contemporary classroom, but it also served as a vehicle for communicating personal experiences, concerns, and commitment to successfully teach all students. Cooperative learning impacted on the way preservice teachers viewed case study dilemmas and their solutions. (Contains 14 references.) (LL)

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A Celebration of Diversity in Teacher Education

Dealing with Diversity Issues in the Classroom: A Case Study Approach

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Dealing with Diversity Issues in the Classroom:

A Case Study Approach

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Purpose:

This presentation offers one example of how the case study method was applied for the purpose of enhancing preservice teachers' decision-making abilities and multicultural perspectives in an undergraduate teacher preparation course. Textbook preparation and field experiences are often insufficient for preservice teachers to take an in-depth and reflective look at the way they think and respond to a variety of "real life" teaching situations. Case studies offer opportunities to deal with specific diversity issues in the classroom such as prejudice, gender bias, poverty, cultural misunderstandings, and pedagogical considerations.

Relationship to Conference Theme:

Today's preservice teachers will be increasing called upon to respond to the diverse learning needs of tomorrow's students. Many preservice teachers are white, middle-class individuals from traditional educational backgrounds. Their limited repertoire of experiences with students of differing cultural, ethnic, socioeconomic, and learning preferences often hampers their ability to look beyond surface classroom problems and see the whole child and situation in its cultural milieu and context. Case studies offer opportunities for preservice teachers to thoughtfully respond to a variety of personalized classroom dilemmas and diversity issues, explore these issues from a variety of perspectives, and to seek solutions they could implement. Knowledge and comfort in dealing with diversity issues empowers preservice teachers to deal more sensitively and competently with <u>all</u> students.

Abstract of Presentation

The use of the case study method is gaining momentum in the United States in the preparation of preservice teachers (White & McNergney, 1991). Case study texts in teacher education present a variety of problems and dilemmas that frequently confront and confound the novice teacher. This connection to the "real world" of teaching provides preservice teachers with opportunities beyond their field placement experiences to carefully reflect and critically analyze teaching incidents to develop schemas appropriate for future classroom practice (Henson, 1988). This is especially helpful when students are solving multicultural cases in the classroom and observing diversity issues in urban field placements, as was the case in this situation. An additional benefit of using the case study method is its responsiveness to the varying developmental differences of teachers-in-training. By assessing and acknowledging preservice teachers' previous experiences and attitudes in response to multicultural and diversity issues, the professor gains a clearer picture of strategies to use to introduce and integrate additional information, advancing problem-solving skills and heighten cultural awareness. This process also promotes and advances students' ethical and moral reasoning (Harrington, 1990-91).

Preservice teachers have experienced great difficulty in changing their attitudes and teaching methods to meet the needs of diverse student populations, even after exposure to the literature and a multicultural workshop on culturally diverse learners (McDiarmid & Price, 1993). It appears that if worthwhile change is to occur in teaching practices (see Richardson, 1990), preservice teachers must have (a) the opportunity to reflect on what they know and value in traditional teaching, (b) have practical experiences with different school populations, points of view, or cultures, and (c) have theory and research to guide their curricular innovations. Solving case studies of multicultural teaching dilemmas in cooperative learning groups gives preservice teachers experiences in both content and process for dealing with "at risk" students.

Two Case Examples

Example One

Participants were 17 students from the Scholar's Section of **EDT 208: Teaching and Learning,** a sophomore level educational psychology course taught at a medium-sized private midwestern university over the course of one semester. Greenwood and Parkay's (1989) *Case Studies For Teacher Decision Making* was the centerpiece of this course and all content was arranged to support the solution of cases selected from among 30 on a variety of levels: practical, theoretical, ethical, and emotional. Students were introduced to a primary theory text, Schunk's (1991) *Learning Theories: An Educational Perspective*, and a collection of contemporary educational psychology articles (Cauley, Linder & McMillan, 1991) to use as background and reference materials. Each student chose a case from a preselected list to diagnose and present to the class for analysis and discussion (see Table 1). An ERIC search was also conducted to support preservice case solutions.

In addition to their written analysis of the case, preservice teachers were also required to present their case orally to peers and to lead a class discussion incorporating alternative viewpoints. Their final exam was to write a clinical case study on one child from their urban field placement. An unexpected outcome was the request by 8 of the 17 preservice teachers to write their own case study on a classroom dilemma from the field.

These preservice teachers discovered that the case study format not only increased their understanding and comprehension of issues in the contemporary classroom, but it also served as a powerful vehicle for communicating their own personal experiences, concerns, and commitment to successfully teach all students (Sudzina & Kilbane, 1992).

Table 1

Multicultural Cases

Case # 12: And If They Don't All Want to Learn? *Motivating disruptive eighth graders from low-income backgrounds in the case of a beginning social studies teacher teaching in an inner-city school.*

Case # 13: Two Different Worlds *Coping with the difficulties of a beginning teacher teaching art in two culturally different junior high schools.*

Case #16: Tough Jerome *Dealing with an aggressive, disruptive student in an eight grade English class.*

Case #21: Not Enough Time *Dealing with a difficult teaching assignment in which a beginning teacher has trouble finding time and assistance to work with a class of combined second and third graders in an urban school.*

Case # 23: Does It Get Any Better? *Coping with the overwhelming demands of an urban high school position in the case of a beginning English teacher.*

Case #25: The Power Struggle *Dealing with administrative power struggles among faculty cliques in an urban high school English department.*

Source: Greenwood, G. & Parkay, F. (1989). Case studies for teacher decision making. NY: McGraw -Hill.

Example Two

Participants were 39 preservice teachers enrolled in **EDT 208: Teaching and Learning**, a sophomore level educational psychology course taught at a medium-sized private midwestern university over the course of one semester. Kowalski, Weaver and Henson's (1990) *Case studies on teaching*, offering 36 classroom vignettes, was the case text of choice. Students were introduced to a primary theory text, Woolfolk's (1991) *Educational psychology (3rd ed.)* and a collection of contemporary educational psychology articles (Cauley, Linder & McMillan, 1991) to use as background and reference materials.

Groups of three students chose a case from a preselected list to diagnose and present to the class for analysis and discussion (see Table 2). Groups were designed to foster and reinforce principles of cooperative learning, an effective group learning strategy that incorporates the benefits of individual accountability and group interdependence (Slavin, 1991). Cooperative learning has also been effective in prejudice reduction in students (Conard, 1988) and in meeting the academic and social needs of students at risk (Sudzina & Douvre, 1993). Preservice teachers also conducted an ERIC search of the related literature for ideas and case solution support.

As in the first example, preservice teachers were required to complete a written analysis of the case with ERIC citations and, in addition, were directed to include three related articles. Case presentations to peers were extremely creative and informative. An unexpected outcome was the high level of innovation and personal involvement by all group members. Clearly, cooperative learning had an impact on the way these preservice teachers viewed their case study dilemmas and how they went about solving them. It appears that many of these groups discussed issues *prior* to their presentations that were often brought to the fore *after*, in class discussion, in classes where preservice teachers made individual case presentations.

Table 2

Multicultural Cases

Case # 1: Choosing The Right Job *concerns a prospective teacher who is faced with choosing a teaching position, one of which has a heavy multicultural population.*

Case # 4: Departing From the Curriculum: The Results *focuses upon a decision to use sociology textbooks other than those approved by the school district.*

Case #10: Rodney Misbehaves *creates a situation demanding an immediate response from the teacher. Whatever response the teacher makes could intensify, rather than resolve, the conflict as Rodney accuses the teacher of being prejudiced.*

Case #12: Multicultural Education and the Challenge of Self-Image *is intended to relate multicultural education to a troubled child's self-image. Multicultural education often is viewed as a tool for imparting information. Here it is suggested that it can be used for psychosocial purposes.*

Case # 28: Can I Borrow That Lesson *focuses on a beginning teacher who is asked to give a lesson plan and instructional materials to another teacher. While this request is the central issue, to what extent might race alter teacher relations?*

Case #29: Dealing With Children's Transition To School *focuses on the problems that a beginning teacher has working with a kindergarten class comprised predominantly of low-income children in organizing effective class instruction.*

Source: Kowalski, T., Weaver, R. & Henson, K. (1990). Case studies on teaching. NY: Longman.

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